HISTORY

Discover Your Legislature Series

Legislative Assembly of
British Columbia
Victoria
British Columbia
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UP TO 1858

1843 – FORT VICTORIA IS ESTABLISHED

In the early 19th century, the London-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) emerged as the dominant fur-trading power in the Pacific Northwest. The HBC had established a series of permanent outposts throughout the area, including its largest settlement, at Fort Vancouver, near the mouth of the Columbia River.

In order to protect its northern holdings from American interests, the HBC built a new post, Fort Victoria, on Vancouver Island. An HBC fur trader named James Douglas supervised construction and administration.

1846 – 49TH PARALLEL BECOMES INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY

Instigated by American settlers, the U.S. and Britain agreed to a formal boundary between their two territories. Up until that time, they had agreed to jointly occupy the Pacific Northwest area, then known as the Oregon Territory.

The Oregon Treaty, also called the Treaty of Washington, was signed on June 15, 1846. The international border extended west along the 49th parallel, across the Rocky Mountains, through the Gulf Islands and around Vancouver Island's southern tip. The treaty formally ceded the territory north of that border to Britain.

B.C.'s southern boundary remained in dispute for several more years, leading to the Pig War in 1859. International arbitration finally resolved the issue in 1872.

1849 – VANCOUVER ISLAND BECOMES A COLONY

The British Crown officially recognized Vancouver Island as a colony in 1849 and began to encourage settlement. Richard Blanshard, a non-practising lawyer and son of a wealthy London merchant, was named as first Governor.

Blanshard clashed constantly with the Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor, James Douglas. After making several disastrous decisions, and disgusted over his lack of authority over the Hudson's Bay Company, Blanshard resigned and left in September, 1851.

The Crown's interest in its new colony was not great. In return for a promise to stimulate colonization, the Crown handed over everyday administration to the HBC. In May 1851 Douglas was appointed Governor of Vancouver Island.

1850 – FIRST ABORIGINAL LAND TREATIES SIGNED

Before settlement of the newly formed Crown Colony of Vancouver Island could proceed, the issue of land ownership had to be decided. Between 1850 and 1854 Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor James Douglas, acting as agent for the British government, negotiated 14 treaties with several Aboriginal groups on Vancouver Island.

The treaties were made for land around Fort Victoria, Fort Rupert and Saanich and for coal mine sites around Nanaimo, totalling about 3 percent of the Island's area. Great Britain was unwilling to spend more on the new colony, and no further treaties were ever drawn up.

Until the Nisga'a Treaty in 1998 the only other treaty affecting Aboriginal people in B.C. was the federal government's Treaty 8. It was negotiated and signed on the prairies in 1899 but included the northeast area of the province.

1856 – FIRST HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ELECTED

In 1856 Britain declared that Governor James Douglas and his council, all employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, lacked the legislative power to make laws and govern the growing Colony of Vancouver Island. The colonial office ordered Douglas to form an elected assembly.

Electoral districts were quickly organized. On June 9 seven representatives were chosen: John Muir, Sooke; Dr. J.S. Helmcken and Thomas J. Skinner, Esquimalt; J.D. Pemberton, James Yates and E.E. Langford, Victoria; and Dr. John F. Kennedy, Nanaimo.

The first House of Assembly of the Colony of Vancouver Island to meet on British soil west of the Great Lakes opened on August 12, 1856. Dr. J.S. Helmcken, physician to the HBC and son-in-law to the Governor, was elected Speaker. The small colony had taken its first steps into parliamentary government.

1858 – CROWN COLONY OF B.C. ON THE MAINLAND IS CREATED

In 1857 gold was discovered on the North Thompson River, on the B.C. mainland. Within the year it had developed into a full-fledged gold rush. The arrival of massive numbers of American miners prompted the Crown to establish British jurisdiction over its lands west of the Rockies before the Americans tried to annex it.

The Colony of British Columbia, named by Queen Victoria herself, was formally declared on August 2, 1858. It stretched from the summit of the Rocky Mountains in the east to the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Georgia, and from the Finlay branch of the Peace River and the Nass Valley in the north to the international boundary on the 49th parallel in the south, and it included the Queen Charlotte Islands. James Douglas, already Governor of Vancouver Island, was appointed Governor of this new jurisdiction on the mainland, provided he resign from the HBC. New Westminster was named as the mainland colony's capital.

To establish order quickly, Douglas received temporary power to legislate by proclamation. He formed an informal council to advise him, but it had no constitutional basis of authority.

1859-1870

1859 – CONSTRUCTION OF "BIRDCAGES" STARTED

Governor James Douglas managed the first decade of colonial government from his offices in the Hudson's Bay Company fort in Victoria and later from his home, Government House. After the mainland colony was formed in 1858 and Douglas was named Governor of both colonies, he realized the need to separate the company's affairs from the Crown's.

Plans for a series of six public buildings to be built on Government Street were drawn up in 1859 by assistant surveyor H.O. Tiedemann (who also designed the Fisguard Lighthouse at Esquimalt). They were completed in 1864 and were used for 30 years.

Based on highly ornamental designs, Victoria's Colonial Administration Buildings were a departure from staid British Victorian architecture. They were described as a "mixed style of architecture, the latest fashion for Chinese pagoda, Swiss-cottage and Italian-villa fancy birdcages." (*Victoria Gazette*, June 23, 1859.) The nickname stuck, as did Tiedemann's style. The colonial bungalow was the dominant architectural influence for homes in Victoria until World War II.

1863 – MAINLAND'S FIRST LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL APPOINTED

The mainland Colony of British Columbia experienced swift growth during the gold rush, which began in 1858.

In 1863, with administration from Vancouver Island no longer deemed efficient, Britain appointed a 15-member legislative council, consisting of five senior officials, five magistrates and five members selected to represent five districts of the mainland colony. It met for the first time in 1864.

During this period, Governor James Douglas's bias for putting Vancouver Island's interests ahead of the mainland's was loudly criticized. Opposition was led by two newspapermen, Amor De Cosmos in Victoria and John Robson in New Westminster. Douglas retired in 1864, to be replaced by two career administrators as Governors of the two colonies: Frederick Seymour and Anthony Musgrave.

1866 – ISLAND AND MAINLAND COLONIES UNITED

The decline of the gold rush, decreasing government revenues and increased debt prompted the introduction of some cost-cutting measures.

Mainland colonial Governor Frederick Seymour recommended to London that Vancouver Island be made part of British Columbia.

On November 19, 1866, the British Parliament passed an act that largely followed Seymour's advice and joined B.C.'s two colonies as the United Colony of British Columbia.

The Colony of Vancouver Island and its elected Legislative Assembly were absorbed into the new colony, with New Westminster as the capital.

Seymour was appointed Governor of the united colonies and proceeded to swear in a formal Executive Council of advisers to replace former Governor James Douglas's informal appointments.

The Legislative Council of British Columbia for the united colony was expanded from 15 to a maximum of 23 members, nine of whom were elected. The remaining were appointed by the Governor or were senior civil servants.

1867 – DOMINION OF CANADA CREATED, JULY 1

The federation of colonies of British North America — New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario — joined together to become the Dominion of Canada on July 1, 1867. Under the *British North America Act, 1867,* the Queen remained head of state, represented nationally in Canada by the Governor General and in each province by a Lieutenant-Governor.

The *British North America Act, 1867,* provided the constitutional framework for our federal system by defining broad areas of provincial and federal responsibility. Such national and international matters as defence, postal service, criminal law and banks are under federal authority. Education, health and natural resources are among the provinces' responsibilities.

On March 30, 1867, just one day after the *British North America Act, 1867,* received Royal Assent in London, the expansionist United States purchased Alaska from Russia.

1868 – VICTORIA NAMED CAPITAL CITY

Following the union of the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, New Westminster served as the home of the newly formed legislative council. Not wishing to anger the residents of Vancouver Island, the first Governor of the united colonies, Frederick Seymour, decided that the council would be given the task of deciding where to locate the provincial capital.

Victoria at the time was B.C.'s largest city, the centre of commerce and easily defended by the nearby Navy base at Esquimalt. Seymour, a mainland resident who favoured New Westminster, stalled after a vote that chose Victoria. Under pressure from London, he held a second vote, with the same result. Residents of Vancouver Island celebrated the vote but some New Westminster residents opposed the relocation of the provincial capital.

On May 25, 1868, Governor Seymour reluctantly proclaimed Victoria the capital of B.C.

1871-1899

1871 – B.C. JOINS CONFEDERATION

After the Canadian Confederation was formed, B.C. Governor Anthony Musgrave, the second and last governor of the united colony, conducted a lengthy campaign for the colony to become part of Canada. The colony was struggling with a stagnant economy, high public debt and too few settlers.

In 1869 American Secretary of State William Seward, who secured the sale of Alaska in 1867, visited Victoria proposing an economic alliance between Alaska, B.C., Washington, Oregon and California.

Legislative debate on this topic was fierce, with former newspaperman Amor De Cosmos leading the pro-Confederation movement. A delegation was sent to Ottawa in 1870 to present British Columbia's demands to Canada. The demands included a call for responsible provincial government, economic aid, debt concessions and the construction of a major transportation link. The preliminary proposal had this transportation link consisting of a wagon road, but eventually, after the delegation had made a 24-day journey from Victoria to Ottawa (via rail out of San Francisco), it became apparent how useful a rail link would be in maintaining order and communication across Canada. These terms were accepted.

On July 20, 1871, British Columbia became the sixth province to join Confederation, receiving three seats in the Senate and six in the House of Commons.

1871 – FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTED

Shortly after joining Confederation in 1871, 25 members were elected to the province's first Legislative Assembly. Under the *British North America Act,* the Canadian Governor General, on behalf of the British Crown, appointed a B.C. Lieutenant-Governor, Joseph Trutch, who then called upon one of the elected MLAs to form a government.

John Foster McCreight became B.C.'s first Premier. He resigned in 1872 after a vote of non-confidence indicated that he had lost the support of the Legislative Assembly. His resignation validated the existence and principles of responsible government.

Amor De Cosmos, who objected to the Lieutenant-Governor's — and therefore the Crown's — attendance and influence during Cabinet meetings, replaced him. He believed these sessions should be for elected representatives only. According to legend, De Cosmos refused to conduct Cabinet business until the Lieutenant-Governor left the room.

1872 – FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ESTABLISHED

The province's first non-denominational free public elementary school system was established in 1872. Within six years, 45 school districts were set up.

Setting up the school system marked the first time a public service was legislated that extended across the province for all British Columbians. Generally, the provincial government was passive concerning public works, being largely concerned with developing natural resources and dispensing political favours to their supporters.

1874 – ABORIGINALS AND CHINESE EXCLUDED FROM THE VOTE

Although representative and responsible government was generally thought to have been achieved in B.C. by 1871, many groups were excluded from any representation at all. Women were traditionally denied a voice in the political process.

In 1871 the ethnic makeup of B.C. was as follows: over 25,000 Aboriginals; 1,500 Chinese; 8,000 whites; and 500 blacks.

In 1874 the Aboriginal and Chinese populations had their right to vote in provincial elections officially denied. Chinese colonists were deliberately excluded because residents feared they would monopolize the job market due to their willingness to work in menial positions for lower wages than whites.

1876 – PROPERTY QUALIFICATION FOR VOTING DROPPED

Traditionally, participation in colonial government and the right to vote belonged solely to those owning a predetermined amount of land. In 1856 that amount was 300 acres or comparable immovable property. This limited those that qualified almost exclusively to Victoria residents. In the late 1860's pressure for truly representative and responsible government increased.

Five years after entering Confederation, the Legislative Assembly expanded electoral representation by extending voting rights to males who didn't own property. In 1876 full male suffrage meant that an adult male needed only to be a British subject and resident in the province for a year and in the electoral district for two months.

Voting was changed just after Confederation from open voting to a secret ballot to avoid intimidation and vote buying.

1886 – FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL TRAIN ARRIVES IN VANCOUVER

After years of postponements, both political and financial, construction of the rail line promised at Confederation began in earnest in 1878. The B.C. portion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad began in 1880 and was completed in 1885, with the hammering of the last spike at Craigellachie, just south of Revelstoke.

The first scheduled passenger train arrived at the western terminus of Port Moody on July 4, 1886.

Soon after, the terminus was moved further west; to the small False Creek lumber community of Granville, known locally as Gastown. It was quickly transformed into the city of Vancouver, soon surpassing Victoria as the province's main western port and commercial centre.

1888 – B.C.'S FIRST HEALTH ACT LEGISLATED

The provincial government's initial foray into public health began with the *Health Act*, S.B.C. 1888, c. 55. It dealt with general issues such as the gathering of disease and death statistics, the investigation of diseases and epidemics and the monitoring of any conditions likely to affect public health, such as the inspection and handling of food.

1893 – CONSTRUCTION OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS STARTED

After a year-long competition, a 25-year-old architect, Francis Mawson Rattenbury, was chosen in March 1892 to design B.C.'s new Parliament Buildings.

Construction began in 1893, partly to try to boost a stagnant economy. Every effort was made to use local materials and resources — granite foundations from Nelson Island; site facades from Haddington Island stone; and local brick, lime and Douglas fir for the construction work.

The total cost was not to exceed $600,000. When the commission was completed four years later, amid much controversy and argument, the total cost came to $923,882.30.

1895 – JAPANESE ARE DISENFRANCHISED

Discrimination against the Japanese, similar to that against the Chinese, was severe. Japanese immigration to B.C. began in 1877, when a sailor named Manzo Nagano jumped ship in New Westminster. Those that followed worked as labourers, many of them miners and fishermen.

In an effort to discourage the increasing numbers of non-white immigrants, the right to vote provincially in 1895 was denied to those of Japanese descent, even if they were already Canadian citizens.

Other discriminatory provincial legislation followed, although the federal government rescinded the majority of it, since it violated international agreements between Britain and Japan.

1897 – NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS COMPLETED

Although B.C.'s new Parliament Buildings were completed in late 1897, the opening was delayed to coincide with that of the Legislative Assembly. Lieutenant-Governor T.R. McInnes formally opened the buildings on February 10, 1898. The only dignitary not attending was the mercurial architect Francis Rattenbury. He was in England raising funds for a scheme involving Klondike steamboats.

At the time they were built, the Parliament Buildings were criticized as an unnecessary extravagance, particularly since they came in over $300,000 over the original $600,000 budget.

Between 1911 and 1915 Rattenbury designed additions to the structure, including the magnificent library, with its elegant marble-panelled rotunda.

1898 – A PERIOD OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY

The new century was a turbulent time in B.C. politics. Public debt was massive, and voters were fed up with governments who put personal and professional self-interest first. Since there were no established political parties, candidates for the Legislative Assembly ran as individuals. This meant their activities were centered on garnering personal support, forming coalitions and bickering amongst themselves, as opposed to proposing bills, debating issues or enacting legislation. This gradually led to a breakdown in government, with no individual able to rally enough support to form a government.

This period of instability lasted from 1898 to 1903. During this time, Lieutenant-Governor T.R. McInnes dismissed two Premiers: John H. Turner and Charles A. Semlin. McInnes alienated both the politicians and the public and was later dismissed by Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier in 1900. He was the only Lieutenant-Governor in B.C. history to have been dismissed mid-term.

Three years after replacing his dismissed predecessor, T.R. McInnes, Lieutenant-Governor Sir H.J. de Lotbiniére was called upon to discharge Premier Edward G. Prior on June 1, 1903.

1900-1917

1903 – FIRST B.C PROVINCIAL ELECTION INVOLVING POLITICAL PARTIES

The Conservative and Liberal Parties formally emerged at separate pre-election conventions in 1902. Prior to that time, MLAs had not aligned themselves with parties, preferring to form alliances with each other based on personal relationships and business interests rather than policies or political principles.

This ever-shifting arrangement became highly unpredictable and adversarial, leading ultimately to the inability to form a government. MLAs accepted the two-party system adapted in other parts of Canada in order to try and bring some stability to government.

The 1903 election included candidates from the Conservative, Liberal, Labour and Socialist Parties. The Conservative Party, led by Richard McBride, won a slim majority of 22 seats in a 42-seat House, the Liberals winning 17, Socialists 2 and Labour 1. McBride remained Premier until 1915.

1914 – THE GREAT WAR BEGINS IN EUROPE

On August 5, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany, and British Columbians of all creeds and races volunteered for service. Aboriginals, Japanese, Chinese and Sikhs all came forward to participate. B.C. had the highest per-capita enlistment rate in Canada, with just over 90 volunteers per 1,000 citizens.

In anticipation of war, Premier Richard McBride had earlier purchased two submarines from Seattle. They arrived in Esquimalt the very morning war was declared. Three days later, the federal government took them over.

The war effort stimulated most of the province's staple industries, particularly shipbuilding.

1915 – PARLIAMENT BUILDING ADDITIONS COMPLETED

In 1911, 14 years after initial construction, architect Francis Rattenbury drew up plans for additions to the Parliament Buildings. These included the East and West Annexes as well as the south wing, housing the magnificent Legislative Library, with its elegant marble-panelled rotunda.

Construction was finished in 1915. The cost came to $1,168,138.16, slightly more than the original buildings.

1917 – WOMEN WIN THE RIGHT TO VOTE

After years of campaigns across Canada and in Britain and the U.S., women in B.C. were granted the right to vote and run for election in 1917. This followed Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta but preceded the rest of Canada.

Women's suffrage was, at the time, closely linked with the temperance movement. Both issues were passed by a referendum on the ballot of the 1916 election.

Federally, war nurses and the immediate female relatives of military men were allowed to vote in 1917. All women were allowed to vote federally in 1918 and allowed to run for election in 1919.

Also in 1917, B.C. became the first province to grant women equal right of custody and guardianship of children.

1917 – PROHIBITION BEGINS BY REFERENDUM

As part of their successful 1916 election platform, the provincial Liberals promoted prohibition and women's suffrage. The election ballot included referendums on both issues, and both were approved.

Legislation soon followed on October 1, 1917, prohibiting the sale of liquor except when used in medical prescriptions.

The new law was difficult and expensive to enforce. Doctors freely prescribed liquor, bootleggers flourished, and bars started selling low-alcohol "near beer." Prohibition was voted out in 1920 and officially repealed in 1921.

1918-1945

1918 – MARY ELLEN SMITH, B.C.'S FIRST WOMAN MLA

Woman's suffrage in 1917 made it possible for women to move directly into provincial politics through election to the Legislative Assembly.

The first to do so was Mary Ellen Smith, who was elected as an independent during a 1918 by-election for Vancouver City, to replace her late husband. She joined the Liberals and remained an MLA until 1921, when she became the first woman cabinet minister in the British Empire. She served as Minister without Portfolio from March 24, 1921, to November 19, 1921. She was also the first woman to serve as acting Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, which she did briefly in February 1928.

She ultimately lost her seat in 1928. Three other women followed her into the Legislative Assembly before the Second World War: Helen Douglas Smith in 1933, Dorothy Steeves in 1934 and Laura Jamieson in 1939.

1921 – B.C. GOVERNMENT LIQUOR STORES OPEN

Before and during World War II every province imposed some form of prohibition on alcoholic beverages. B.C.'s took effect on October 1, 1917.

Voters eliminated prohibition during a plebiscite on October 20, 1920, the second province after Quebec to do so. Instead, they voted for a system of government-controlled alcohol sales. New legislation was passed to build and operate government liquor stores. Liquor policy was to be overseen and regulated by a three-person Liquor Control Board.

Prohibition was officially repealed on June 15, 1921, the day the first government liquor stores opened for business.

1920 – B.C.'S FIRST SOCIAL ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION PASSED

After suffrage in 1917 B.C. became the first province to grant women equal right of custody and guardianship of children. Women became active in the provincial political arena. They campaigned for various social reforms, including family law issues such as foster homes, child care centres, rights for juvenile offenders and raising the minimum wage for women.

Through their efforts, the *Mother's Pension Act,* S.B.C. 1920, c. 61, became the first social assistance bill passed in the province. It provided a monthly subsidy to single mothers.

Throughout the 1920s, women's groups helped establish hospitals and the beginnings of the provincial public health system.

All this took place before Canadian women were declared persons under the law in 1929.

1923 – FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROHIBITS CHINESE IMMIGRATION

Racism and discrimination existed not only on a provincial level but also nationally. Many initiatives were designed to discourage immigration of Asians, in particular.

In 1923 the federal government revoked the head tax, a fee charged Chinese entering the country, replacing it with the *Chinese Immigration Act*, S.B.C. 1923, c. 38, which virtually halted all immigration from China.

Over the next two dozen years, only 44 Chinese entered the country. By 1931 less than 4 percent of B.C.'s population was Chinese.

1929 – STOCK MARKET CRASH CAUSES GREAT DEPRESSION

Throughout the early 1920s B.C.'s economy flourished, tied to the rise of international markets. In October 1929 those markets collapsed, sparking a worldwide downturn known as the Great Depression, which lasted throughout the 1930s.

Every aspect of the B.C. economy was affected. Net value of production and exports fell by almost 60 percent. Thousands of men entered the province looking for work, raising tensions.

Vancouver's first modern skyscraper, the Marine Building, went into construction early in 1929 and opened in 1930. It cost $2.5 million and bankrupted its builders in 1932.

By 1931, with unemployment at 31 percent, Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie was forced to set up relief camps, putting the unemployed to work building roads and other facilities. By 1935 there were 200 camps throughout the province.

1934 – SPECIAL POWERS ACT IMPOSED

As the Great Depression wore on, the economic situation in B.C. remained critical. Newly elected Premier Thomas "Duff" Patullo successfully petitioned the federal government for emergency powers to introduce state reforms quickly.

The *Special Powers Act,* S.B.C. 1934, c. 60, was granted and gave government control over all matters in the province for one year. Under it, Patullo introduced programs such as health insurance, a higher minimum wage, public works, more money to schools and help for the poor and unemployed.

Although the Prime Minister granted the Premier's request, he and the press began referring to Patullo as a "dictator" and spent the next eight years thwarting the Premier's requests for economic aid.

1934 – FIRST MINIMUM WAGE ENACTED

As part of his new government's measures to combat the province's economic crisis during the Great Depression, Premier Thomas "Duff" Patullo invoked the *Special Powers Act* to swiftly pass much-needed legislation.

His government introduced three acts with the intention of spreading available jobs more evenly and increasing the working person's self-respect. They were the *Hours of Work Act, 1934,* S.B.C. 1934, c. 30, which introduced a 48-hour workweek in all major industries; the *Male Minimum Wage Act, 1934,* S.B.C. 1934, c. 47; and the *Female Minimum Wage Act, 1934,* S.B.C. 1934, c. 48.

The Legislative Assembly fixed the minimum wages at a higher rate and minimum wages were also applied to women. A 48-hour workweek in all major industries was also introduced.

At that time, the government also began investigating the idea of unemployment insurance, which was later enacted nationally in 1940.

1938 – UNEMPLOYMENT LEADS TO UNREST

On May 30, 1938, in an effort to limit the numbers of unemployed workers migrating into the province, the government restricted relief to all but B.C. residents. Violence broke out as a thousand men took over the post office, the art gallery and the Hotel Georgia in Vancouver. The idea was to focus attention on their grievances by forcing authorities to make mass arrests, but the authorities did not cooperate.

After ten days most were persuaded to leave, while others held out, occupying the post office and art gallery for six weeks more.

At last, on June 19 — Bloody Sunday, as it came to be known — police moved in using tear gas and clubs. The evicted men proceeded to riot down Hastings and Granville Streets. Over a hundred men were wounded and 22 arrested.

1939 – WORLD WAR II DECLARED, GREAT DEPRESSION ENDS

September of 1939 saw the world plunged into another great conflict. As attention and efforts focused on the war in Europe, the Depression lifted.

Enlistment in the Armed Forces soared, and manufacturing grew, in particular shipbuilding and aircraft construction. The value of production in the province essentially doubled over the six years of World War II. Aboriginal people and Asians enlisted, even though still not voters.

Workers from the prairies flocked to the coast, causing housing shortages. At one point over 30,000 men and women were employed at shipyards in greater Vancouver and Victoria.

Industries traditionally closed to women, such as plywood and pulp and paper mills, welcomed female contributions to their workforce.

1941 – B.C. AFTER PEARL HARBOUR

December 8, 1941, one day after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, wartime blackout measures went into effect all along the B.C. coast. On December 9 Premier Thomas "Duff" Patullo resigned and was replaced by Liberal leader John Hart. Canada declared war on Japan shortly after.

Pearl Harbour also spurred the American government to build a northern highway for the defence of Alaska. The road went through northeast B.C. and served to open up the area from Dawson Creek to Watson Lake in the Yukon Territory.

The Americans also built an airstrip at Fort Nelson, and Prince Rupert became a supply centre and a staging post for American bases as well as a centre for highway construction.

1942 – TREATMENT OF JAPANESE DURING WAR

In 1941 B.C.'s Japanese population numbered more than 22,000. More than half were Nisei, born and raised in the province. After Pearl Harbour, there was widespread fear that anyone of Japanese descent, in particular the coastal fisherman who made up the majority of B.C.'s fishing fleet, might act against Canada's interests.

Canada seized some 14,000 fishing boats and homes, imprisoning the owners and their families inside internment camps located in the interior. In 1945, the federal government offered internees the choice of deportation to Japan or relocation east of the Rocky Mountains. Deportation was later cancelled due to public protest, but not before nearly 4,000 people had been sent to Japan. The rest were only allowed to return to the coast in 1949.

No Japanese Canadian was ever charged with disloyalty, and the incident is now acknowledged as one of the worst human rights violations in B.C.'s history. In 1988 the federal government formally apologized and offered compensation.

1945 – SECOND WORLD WAR ENDS

Amid global rejoicing on May 7, 1945, a giant VE day (victory in Europe) parade made its way through downtown Vancouver. Bonfires blazed on beaches in North and West Vancouver, air-raid sirens wailed in Victoria, and boats sounded their whistles in the Inner Harbour.

During the war, B.C. enjoyed a sustained period of political stability thanks to a coalition government uniting the Liberals and Conservatives. The wartime economic boom also helped this government win a solid re-election majority in 1945, and then again in 1949.

1946-1971

1948 – B.C.'S FIRST SALES TAX ENACTED

In an effort to pay for increased social programs, the coalition government introduced B.C.'s first sales tax of 3 percent, on April 8, 1948.

The *Social Security and Municipal Aid Tax Act,* S.B.C. 1948, c. 82, came under attack for being too far-reaching, covering everything from automobiles to medicines. It passed into law and went into effect July 1.

Other legislation passed at the same time, the *Hospital Insurance Act,* S.B.C. 1948, c. 28, was also unpopular. It set up a system of provincial hospital insurance paid for by premiums heavily weighted against single people. The plan ran into financial difficulties and was amended in 1954 by adding 2 percent to the sales tax.

ENFRANCHISEMENT OF MINORITIES

source: Elections British Columbia: An Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986. Victoria: 1988, p. 530

	Disenfranchised	Enfranchised[1]
Women	–	1917
Chinese	1874	1947
Aboriginals	1874	1949
Japanese	1895	1949
Hindus	1907	1947
Doukhobors	1931[2]	1952
Mennonites	1931[2]	1948
Hutterites	1931[2]	1948

Various occupational groups were also excluded at different times, including civil servants, teachers, judges, police officers, political agents and the military. Patients of mental health facilities and other provincial institutions have also been barred. However, only those groups rendered ineligible by reason of birth have been included in this table.

1949 – FIRST ABORIGINAL PERSON ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Frank Calder, a Nisga'a, was the first Aboriginal person elected to a provincial Legislative Assembly in Canada. He ran in 1949 for the CCF, or Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, a relatively new party working to form a socialist government using democratic means.

Calder held his seat in Atlin until 1956, then again from 1960 to 1975. He joined the New Democratic Party Cabinet in 1972 as Minister without Portfolio, becoming the first Aboriginal cabinet minister in Canadian history.

He was the founding president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, holds the Order of Canada and is an inductee of the First Nations Hall of Fame.

[1] War service in many cases conferred the right to vote before the prohibition was lifted. In 1931 Japanese who had fought in World War I were allowed to vote, in 1945 anyone who had served in either world war was granted the right, and in 1947 any war service was sufficient. In 1948 marriage to an eligible voter allowed women in prohibited categories to vote.

[2] Although not specifically mentioned by name until 1947, these groups were disenfranchised in 1931 by virtue of their special exemption from military service. The 1931 amendment was specifically directed against the Doukhobors.

1950 - FIRST WOMAN SPEAKER IN THE COMMONWEALTH

The former women's editor of the *Victoria Daily Times* for 26 years, Nancy Hodges was a strong advocate for women's rights. She was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1941 and held her seat until 1953. During her tenure, Nancy Hodges became the first woman Speaker of the B.C. Legislative Assembly and the first in the history of the Commonwealth on February 14, 1950.

She remained Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and became the first woman from B.C. appointed to the federal Senate later that year.

1952 – W.A.C. BENNETT, B.C.'S LONGEST-SERVING PREMIER, ELECTED

After serving as a Conservative member of the anti-socialist coalition government during the Depression, W.A.C. Bennett joined the new Social Credit Party in 1951. In 1952 the Social Credit Party won a surprise election victory by one seat, and Bennett was asked to form the government.

Upon his election, Bennett formed a Cabinet that reflected the province's changing socioeconomic nature. Tilly Rolston became the first woman to hold a Cabinet portfolio: Education. Trade unionists and people of German, Norwegian and Italian descent as well as evangelical Christians were all represented in the new Cabinet.

Under his 20-year leadership, economic growth was rapid and dynamic. Based on resource development and out-of-province investment, his government helped build power dams, highways and railways.

1958 – LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION GIVEN YEAR-ROUND OFFICE

During the 20-year term of Premier W.A.C. Bennett, the Legislative Assembly followed strict procedures and was tightly controlled. Sittings were brief, usually six to eight weeks.

In 1958 the Leader of the Opposition was given a year-round office in Victoria, but other opposition members were not. Research and secretarial help for them was also minimal.

Bennett often kept the House in session past the normal 11 p.m. adjournment hour until the Opposition capitulated. Between 1952 and 1972, the average session had at least three post-midnight sittings, referred to by the Opposition of the day as "legislation by exhaustion."

1972-2001

1967 – LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SITS IN NEW WESTMINSTER

For the first and only time, a session of the Legislative Assembly was held outside of Victoria.

On January 24, 1967, the new session opened at an ice arena in New Westminster.

This was in honour of the centenary of the first sitting of a Legislative Assembly governing the area corresponding to modern B.C. The Legislative Council of the United Colony of British Columbia at New Westminster sat for the first time on the same day in 1867.

1972 – FULL REPORTING BY HANSARD BEGINS

The Legislative Assembly first introduced a limited Hansard (the verbatim record of the proceedings in the Chamber and in committees) in 1970.

This early record was only made available after the session of the House had concluded and did not contain debates on the committee stage of bills or the Committee of Supply's review of spending estimates.

In 1972 a full daily Hansard was implemented, and continues to serve as a complete record of everything said in the House. Legislative sessions started to be televised in 1991.

1973 - FULL DAILY QUESTION PERIOD BEGINS

By 1973, the Legislative Assembly had instituted a number of parliamentary reforms including the production of a full Hansard record and the holding of a daily 15-minute Question Period.

Opposition leader W.A.C. Bennett asked the first oral question on March 5, 1973. He asked the Premier to withdraw several bills because the "millions of dollars of new expenditure" they involved would cause "hardship on our people." It was ruled out of order by Speaker Gordon Dowding because, according to parliamentary rules, a question cannot deal with a bill that stands on the Orders of the Day (the agenda for the House). The first oral question allowed by the Speaker dealt with the sale of poisoned lettuce.

1973 – RESTORATION AND RENOVATION OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS STARTS

After a report on the condition of the Parliament Buildings was made in 1973 to Minister of Public Works William Hartley, an extensive restoration project was undertaken in 1974. The work was finally completed in 1983.

The complex task of restoring the Chamber was accomplished in just three months — roof trusses tightened, television lighting and air conditioning installed, plaster repaired, windows repaired or replaced and a complete redecoration of the room itself.

An army of fine craftsmen — painters, plasterers stained-glass workers — was utilized to perform the work. For example, some 46 ounces of 23-karat gold were applied to detail work in the upper memorial rotunda in the Legislative Library.

1976 – B.C. LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ESTABLISHED

The British Columbia Legislative Internship Program began in 1976 as a joint academic program of the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, and the University of British Columbia. The program was designed and proposed to the Legislative Assembly by academics representing the three universities (in fact, by faculty from the three political science departments).

The general purpose is to provide relevant public affairs and career-oriented experience for bachelor-level graduates of the universities. Each year, the British Columbia Legislative Internship Program selects ten legislative interns. They work full-time for six months, starting in January, spending two months working in a ministry and the remaining period as researchers and assistants assigned to one of the party caucuses in the House. Interns provide a valuable service and learn firsthand the inner workings of the provincial parliamentary system. The program, administered jointly by the province's public universities and the Speaker's office, is funded by the Legislative Assembly.

1983 – OPPOSITION LEADER REMOVED FROM HOUSE

In 1983 Bill Bennett's Social Credit government introduced policies of widespread restraint designed to combat the sharp economic downturn. Major cutbacks were proposed in social services, education and labour, leading to demonstrations and work stoppages throughout the summer and fall.

At 4:30 a.m. on October 6 of that year, during a round-the-clock sitting of the Legislative Assembly to debate the *Public Sector Restraint Act*, S.B.C. 1983, c. 26, the New Democratic Party Opposition Leader and former Premier, Dave Barrett, was physically removed from the Chamber after repeatedly disregarding the authority of the Speaker.

Barrett's removal marked the first time in the history of the House that an MLA had to be forcibly removed. The bill passed on October 12.

1989 – ORDER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ESTABLISHED

The Order of British Columbia was established on April 21, 1989, to honour people "who have served with the greatest distinction and excelled in any field of endeavour benefiting the people of the province of B.C."

Nominees suggested by the public are considered by a seven-person advisory council chaired by the provincial Chief Justice, with final appointments made by the Lieutenant-Governor.

Rock star Bryan Adams and former Lieutenant-Governor Henry Bell-Irving were among the first to receive the new Order of British Columbia.

1991 – RITA JOHNSTON, FIRST WOMAN PREMIER IN CANADIAN HISTORY

After serving as Premier for five years, Premier Bill Vander Zalm resigned as a result of a conflict of interest in 1991. Rita Johnston, MLA for Surrey-Newton, succeeded him as interim leader on April 2, 1991, becoming the first woman Premier in Canadian history. On July 20, 1991, she was officially elected leader at the Social Credit leadership convention, serving as Premier until October 17, 1991, the date of the general election in which Johnston's Social Credit Party was defeated. She lost her seat and returned to private life.

Johnston entered provincial politics in 1983. She had been Minister of Municipal Affairs and was serving as Minister of Transportation and Highways just prior to becoming Premier.

1992 – VOTING AGE LOWERED TO 18 YEARS

Although the federal government lowered the voting age to 18 in 1970, it wasn't until 22 years later that the government of B.C. followed suit. This added about 40,000 residents to the list of eligible voters.

At the time, the discrepancy this created between the voting age and the legal drinking age of 19 was acknowledged as a contradiction but not one that required a remedy.

1998 – DRAFT OF NISGA'A TREATY SIGNED, FIRST TREATY IN 100 YEARS

After nearly five years of negotiations, the Nisga'a initialled a historic treaty with the provincial and federal governments. This was the first agreement made in B.C. between Aboriginals and government since Treaty 8 was signed in 1899 between the federal government and the Cree, Beaver, Chipewyan and other Aboriginals who lived in the northeast region of the province, east of the Rocky Mountains, the Northwest Territories, northern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

2001 – FIRST WOMAN LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF B.C. APPOINTED

The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, B.C.'s first woman Lieutenant-Governor, was installed as the 27th Lieutenant-Governor of the province on September 25, 2001.

Born on Galiano Island, she grew up at a salmon cannery on the Skeena River, near Prince Rupert. She later became a municipal councillor, school trustee and school board Chair in the northern B.C. town.

She served as the Member of Parliament for Skeena from 1974 to 79 and was a Minister in the P.E. Trudeau cabinet. Ms. Campagnolo was the founding chancellor of the University of Northern British Columbia and has served on various non-governmental boards and commissions. She has been honoured with the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia, recognizing her community contributions and leadership.